

**THE DEATH OF WASHINGTON.
A POEM. IN IMITATION OF THE MANNER OF OSSIAN.**

The time will come when Destiny and Death
Thron'd in a burning car, the thundering wheels
Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant
Shall scour these fields of death: and in the rear
The fiend Oblivion: Kingdoms, empires, worlds
Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high
Andraste darting catches from the wreck
The roll of Fame, claps her ascending plumes
And stamps on orient stars each patriot name
Round her eternal dome.

Maida.

[Page iii]

PREFACE.

The memory of the illustrious **General George Washington** should ever be held in the heart of his Country, to whom his character was an honour, and to whom he rendered the most signal services. The voice of his praise should never slumber, and his mighty example should never die. Every attempt to pay the debt due to his labours for us, is laudable, tho' it may prove unsuccessful, for tho' the understanding may not be equal to the task of gratitude, yet the heart thereby declares its warmest wishes.

I have from my earliest days admired the Poems of Ossian.---Their manner, so chaste and simple, renders them an happy conveyance of the sentiments of eulogy, and makes nearer approach to the unequalled excellence of the sacred scriptures than that of any other writings I have ever seen. When great grief or joy affects the soul, our expressions cannot be subjected to the rules of art. A sudden exclamation, in seemingly irregular

[Page iv]

and incoherent sentences, evidences that the speaker feels more than he expresses; and will

more powerfully influence the hearts of the hearers than the fullest expressions. It is this which gives such sublimity and efficacy to the writings of Ossian. From an admiration of those Poems, and in order to deviate from the beaten path of eulogy, I have endeavoured to throw the following tribute of respect to our departed Chief, into their form. I have endeavoured to make the harp of Ossian sing the praises of the Fingal of America. To those who are unacquainted with the Bard of Caledonia this Poem will come unacceptable, but it is a satisfaction to know, that, should my attempt succeed, it will be welcomed by those who have listened with delight to his song. It may be unnecessary to mention, that in the following Poem, by a poetic license, the name of Fingal is given to **General Washington**, not only to render the stile conformable, but to mark the striking resemblance between the two heroes.

[Page 5]

In his silent hall, sat the Bard, and thought on the deeds of fame. Sorrow was on his cheek, and his harp lay by his side. The loud blast howled around his hall, and the sons of the sea were heard to dash the waters of the deep. The moon looked pale behind a

[Page 6]

cloud. The shades of darkness sat heavy on the hills. Sleep had fallen on the world, and the ghosts of night dimly stalked the heath. Suddenly thro' the gloom came a voice to the ear of the Bard---it was the voice of sorrow. The Messenger of ill appeared. He threw upon the ground his pointless spear. The tear stood in his eye. He told of the death of Fingal, the father of his people, the prince of heroes. The Bard started from his seat. Grief was at his heart. His thoughts were with the spirit of the hero. He lifted his harp. He slowly struck the solemn sounds. The breeze of night smote the trembling strings. His song was of former times. The deeds of Fingal were before him. "And is the Chief of Vernon fallen?---said he with a rising sigh--Is the grey-haired warrior laid low? He rests with his fathers. The blast of midnight sweeps over his grave. The dim moon-beam now sleeps upon the moss which covers him: there the thistle shakes its lonely head; and the long grass

[Page 7]

whistles in the wind. Silence is in the hall of Fingal. His bow hangs unbent; his spear leans against the wall; his foes no longer tremble at the sound of his bossy shield. His wife is left alone in her sorrow. No son enquires for his father, and asks her why she weeps! Fingal is the last of his race, and there is none to bend his bow and to lift his spear. But thy name, O Fingal, shall never die. Thy country are thy children. Thou ever livest in their thoughts. Tho' thy voice will never again sound amid their councils---thy remembrance will ever be with them, and thy precepts be written in their hearts. Tho' the lightning of thy sword will never again descend upon their foes---thy remembrance will animate their battles. The youthful hero will think of thee,

[Page 8]

and the steps of death will follow swift behind his blade. Thy deeds have rode upon the ocean. Kings have trembled before thy name. Thy fame is with the bards. While the harp lives, will live the name of Fingal. Fingal was the friend of the sons of song, and the sons of song are the friends of Fingal.

Once an hundred bards surrounded the king of the isle of mists. But they all rest in the narrow house. Ossian is now no more. Carril is now no more. Death has fallen on their harps. They animate no longer the strife of spears. The ghosts of their fathers visit no longer their dreams. They sit no longer by the mossy fountains, on the top of

[Page 9]

the hills and hear the storm howl over the lake of Lego, and bid the deeds of other times arise. The Bard of the feeble hand now strikes the harp. He loves the song of Ossian, and would sing like him. But the harp of Ossian was buried with him, and none again can awaken his song.

Roll on ye dark-brown years, sorrow is in your course. Joy sits not on the passing hour. The sun sinks sullen behind his hill. The moon rises in blood. Mournful Potowmac rolls his dark-blue wave, and washes the shores where sleep the ashes of the Hero. On a rock high as Tromathon where the eagle build his

[Page 10]

nest, reclines the Genius of the flood. His green mantle streams with the blast. His arms are folded on his breast. His eye is fixed. His tears mingle with the waters. His sighs with the wind. He mourns for the death of the Chief.

Return to my mind, ye years that have passed! Scenes of former days revisit my remembrance! Let the deeds of Fingal's youth live in my song---the deeds of Fingal when he first lifted the spear of his fathers---Bright in the dawn of life, he followed an Albion chief to

[Page 11]

the war against the tribes of the desert. On the banks of the Monongahela, the warriors pitched their tents, and called the council of chiefs. Fingal was the youngest among the warriors---but his words were the wisest. He shone before all in the smiles of his youth, and in the stature of his strength---like the tree, which towers first in the forest---like the star, which leads on the wandering train of the night, and follows the brightest path in the heavens. His beaming eye struck terror on his foe. The lightning followed his sword, death was on his waving plume. He knew no fear---but he warned of danger. "The foe of

[Page 12]

the desert are dark in their designs. Their footsteps are near to our tents. Amid the secret shade they lurk unknown like the ghosts of the hills wrapt in their clouds of mists. Their step is like the step of death, which springs on his unwary prey. Their blow falls like the thunder's arm,

while the warrior sees no danger. Here, O chief, remain with thy bands, and let Fingal with a few warriors scour the woods"---Thus Fingal spoke---but the Chief disdained the counsel of his youth. He stood sullen like a blasted pine of the forest. Pride was on his lowering brow. In a voice of rage he called his chiefs. Indignant he struck his shield and strode towards the foe. The tribes of the desert heard it and trembled at the sound. Deep in the woods the warriors follow his steps. They leave the beam of heaven and deep around them fall the glooms of night. An awful silence reigns around. No sound is heard---save now and then the dying gale panting

[Page 13]

amid the leaves, and the weary foot of the warrior beating the hollow ground.---Suddenly a blast sweeps thro' the shade---and all is still again. Doubt paused the heart of the chief. Pondering, he stood like the daring Roman when before his eye, spread the sacred shades of Mona and the caves of the Druids. But still he held his course through the thickets. Suddenly arise the yells of the savage, frightful as the shriek of the spirit of Loda ,

[Page 14]

when the sword of the king of Morven wound a passage thro' his form . From ambush start

[Page 15]

the watchful foe. Like the noise of many streams they gather around their dark-brown chiefs. Swift as the lightning's course they spring upon the warriors of Albion. From the tawny arm fly the frequent arrows of death. Many are the warriors laid low. Beneath the arm of a savage, Braddock the chieftain falls. A deeper darkness gathers around. The groans of the fallen---the loud yell of the tribes of the desert rise upon the wind. Horror walks in blood. Sullen ascends the moon in her path thro' the heavens and pauses awhile to shed a sadder gloom over the mangled forms of the slain. Let an hundred bards raise the song in Fingal's

[Page 16]

praise. Let it be like the song which was raised to the king of Morven when sleep descended on the wings of night, and when the red-light glimmered on the walls of Selma.--- The chief being slain, Fingal held the spear of command. His soul kindled at the death of his friends. Like a rock, he stood amid the roaring torrent, while on his broad bosom beat the storm. Wherever he came, death strewed his paths. The ghosts of his slain shrieked from the hills and melted in the blast from the lightning of his blade. With his bold arm he covered the retreat of his friends, and from the shadows of death he led them again to safety and to rest---Such was among the first of the feats of Fingal. His name then grew great in the fields of fame, and his country honoured his worth. Fingal returned to the hall of his fathers, and gave his spear to the arms of peace.

[Page 17]

The years rolled on in their course, and peace dwelt on those rolling years. At length over the waters of the deep came the sons of Albion to war against the land of our fathers and the rights of their children. In numbers, trained to blood, they poured on the defenceless shores; dismay struck the peasant's heart: discord reared her dark standard, and liberty was rising on her airy wings. Fingal was again called to the battle. He answered the call--- and again shook his spear amid the fields of blood. He was chosen first among the chiefs high in fame. Every warrior owned his commands. They followed his footsteps to triumph. They joined in the songs of his praise. They mingled their tribute with their love---The youthful hero who led the strife on the banks of the Monongahela now in ripened manhood leads the battles of his country. The beam of morn then glittered on his arms. Now the

[Page 18]

full sun of glory flames around his sword.--- Where, O Fingal, shall begin the numbers of thy deeds? Shall the bard trace thy course over the dark-blue wave? Shall he follow thee over the mountain of mists? Shall he listen to the clashing of spears in the vale? Shall he search thee thro' all the fields of thy fame? Shall Monmouth, Brandywine and Germantown arise in his song? Shall he climb the high-grounds of Boston which rear their heads in the clouds, where Fingal called his warriors around him? Shall he uncover the plains of Princeton, streaming with the blood of the slain? Shall York live in his song, where the thousands of the foe threw down the spear and sought the shell of peace ? Shall he follow

[Page 19]

to Trenton, thy silent footsteps, where the foe were surprised in their slumber, and fell before thy arms of power: Dark was the night---such as when the spirit of Loda takes his flight. Silence had folded her wings and slept upon the hills. The weary warrior rested on his shield. Fingal with his band were awake. The darkened Delaware rolled beneath the winds. The spirit of destruction guarded his shores, and shrieked amid the angry deep. Fingal approached. The light glimmered on the distant way. His joy arose amid the storm, like the lightning's path thro' the sky of darkness. He pointed with his spear the course to his friends. He dashed the waters beneath him--- and leapt on the ground of the foe. The foe awoke amid the arms of Fingal--- Strike the harp, sons of Columbia!---let the voice of the song arise---such as the hero might hear, while he leaned upon his shield, and his warriors slumbered around. These were the scenes of

[Page 20]

Fingal's fame---amid these the spirit of death heard his voice in the battle. The eye of remembrance loves the fields where Fingal fought. The grey-haired fathers and the children of the plains point the places to the traveller and say---"there the hero led his warriors---there the foe fell beneath the pow-of his!arm."

The sons of Albion driven from our shores, Fingal gave up the spear of his command, and sought again the shade of peace. His friends who followed him to war, offered him the crown of the people: but he turned it from him. He wished only to reign in their hearts.

The years now rolled on in joy. Peace overshadowed the land---and shook the dews from her wings on the fields of plenty. Fingal was called by the voice of his country to be the head in her councils, and the arm of the people. The aged hero comes forth. His grey locks wave on the wind. The lightning

[Page 21]

of heaven still lingers in his eye. The thunder still rolls from his lips. He looks as did the king of Morven in the last of the fields of his fame. The voice of millions bless the chief, and kings hail the mighty Fingal. He takes his seat at the head of the people of his love. He calls the warriors of his youth around him.

The land grew beneath his care. The towers of the city arose. The mountains laughed---the valley sang for joy. The thistle shook its lonely head to the breeze, nor feel beneath the foot of battle. The dogs of war ceased their howling on the heath. The hum of the bee came from the hills---Nor did the sound of the shield drown the song joyful to the ear of the hunter.

His country established upon a rock, and the close of his days drawing near, Fingal once more looked to the hall of his repose. He

[Page 22]

gave again the spear into the hands of the people, and amid the shades of Vernon, he rested from his mighty toils. Fingal there rested from his toils---and there the hero fell ---Go with thy rustling wing, O breeze! and sigh on the hero's tomb. It rises yonder at the rock, by the blue winding stream---

Son of Columbia, why is thy countenance sad? Daughter of the wave why that tear--- why is thy bosom bare---why does thy long black hair stream on the wind? Wanderer of the night why is thy step in darkness and thy voice mournful as the breeze upon the lake of Lego? Has then the Hero fallen? Is Fingal no more seen in the halls of his fathers? Tell me not Messenger of ill---I know that the chief rests with the dead. In his grey hairs he has

[Page 23]

fallen like the sun amid the blue skies of heaven.

Weep O land of my fathers---let Fingal ever live in the heart of your love. Let the warrior's spear be broken, and his shield be hung from the tree. "Let the heavens be clothed in black," and no light mark his course through the darkness. Winds of the north blow upon the strings of my harp! Dreams from the grave visit my slumbers! Let me see the chief of heroes in his glory. Let my song be as the song of Ossian when through the gloom he sang of the king of Morven.

Sweet be thy slumbers chief of Vernon. Thy soul was like the beam of heaven. Thine arm was like a falling tower. Thy deeds were mighty among the deeds of heroes. To thy fame thy country shall raise a stone on high to speak to future times with its grey head of moss. And when thou O stone shall moulder

[Page 24]

down and loose thee in the depth of years, then shall the traveller come and whistling pass away. But Fingal shall be cloathed with fame, a beam of light to other times; for he went forth in echoing steel to save the weak in arms.

[Page 25]

In dismissing this subject the author feels a mingled and melancholy pleasure. He has as far as his feeble powers would bear him, joined in the united voice of gratitude to him who as the instrument of an almighty and merciful God defended and bought for us the freedom and possessions of our fathers. Never, he has supposed, can the ear of the public be satiated by the strains of eulogy on one whom they ought continually to love, and who merits all that can be offered. While engaged in the preceeding poem he often wished for the force and pathos of the great original whom he imitated, that he might not fall beneath the enthusiastic elevation of the hearts of his countrymen. Over the ashes of the hero of his praise he would then have strewn a worthier laurel: He would have struck a chord whose vibrations should have sounded

[Page 26]

through every region, kindled the ardour of the patriot and awakened the sleeping slave.

But though "with a zeal disproportioned to his strength" he has engaged in a subject at which he should have trembled; he hopes that as he has sincerely written from his feelings, he may communicate some faint impression of the same feelings to his readers, and excite that warm and pensive train of reflection, which they would not exchange for a different pleasure.

This is the highest hope, and highest reward which the author indulges from his poem, while he launches it on the world.